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Structural Differences Between the Vancouver, Victoria, & Interior Regional Economies of B. C.

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A NOTE ON THE THREE REGIONAL ECONOMIES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Abstract

Structurally, the provincial economy of British Columbia is composed of three distinct regional economies: the metropolitan Vancouver region with its relative emphasis on producer services, the metropolitan Victoria region with its specialization in administrative services, and the provincial "Interior," which has a pronounced orientation toward the extractive activities. Differences between the three regional economies are examined in terms of labour force distribution, per capita income levels, unemployment rates, and employment growth. The lack of research into the economic linkages between the regions is noted.

Introduction

As of the fall, 1989, the population of British Columbia had been estimated to reach 2,375,000. The province contains two major cities or census metropolitan areas (CMAs): Vancouver, the nation's third largest urban area, and Victoria, the provincial capital and Canada's fourteenth largest CMA. The economies of the two urban regions differ significantly from each other and from the economy of the remainder of the province. The purpose of this study is to detail and analyse these differences, as they have obvious important implications for provincial economic policy. In the sections to follow, an examination is made of the three regions with respect to economic structure, growth, and performance. Some economic linkages between the three regions are sketched largely on the basis of judgement.

Economic Structure

Structurally, the provincial economy of B.C. is composed of three regional economies:

- The metropolitan Vancouver economy, which is distinguished by its highly developed complex of interrelated corporate or producer services. (Producer services are here broadly defined to

include not only Finance, Insurance & Real Estate (F.I.R.E.) and Business Services, but also Transportation & Storage, Communication & Other Utilities, and Wholesale Trade.[1]

- The provincial capital region of Victoria, which is heavily oriented toward government services.
- The remainder of the provincial economy, the B.C. Interior, which is largely dominated by the resource-based, extractive industries of agriculture, mining, fishing, and forestry.

Evidence for this conceptual division of the provincial economy is shown in Table 1. Although in terms of total employment, Vancouver is roughly the same size as Victoria and the B.C. Interior combined, the region contains over 63% of the province's employment in producer services. Such services account for nearly 30% of the region's total employment, compared with 19% for the Victoria region and 18% for the Interior. Largely because of its specialization in the so-called 'advanced' services, metropolitan Vancouver has the highest per capita income ($19,414) compared with Victoria ($18,455) and the Interior ($14,927).[2]

The picture distinctly changes, however, with a shift of focus to public-sector or administrative services. The metropolitan Victoria region clearly stands out among the three regions, with Government Services accounting for nearly 18% of total employment in the region, approximately three times the corresponding percentages for the Vancouver and Interior regions. The Victoria region also displays the highest percentages for the Educational Services and the Health & Social Services sectors, largely because provincial administration accounts for a significant proportion of employment in these sectors. As tourism is second only to administrative services as a basic activity in metropolitan Victoria, the region also records the highest percentages in the Food & Accommodation and Retail Trade sectors.

With respect to resource-based economic activity, the Interior region dominates, with the extractive industries accounting for nearly 15% of total employment. This compares with 2.7% for the Vancouver region and 3.5% for metropolitan Victoria.

An alternative way of looking at the differences in economic structures between the three regions is to consider the measures of specialization shown in Table 2. The first of these two measures is

Table 1. Labour Force Distribution: Canada, Vancouver, Victoria, B.C. Interior, 1986

Industry	Canada		Vancouver		Victoria		B.C. Interior	
	L.F.	%	L.F.	%	L.F.	%	L.F.	%
Agriculture	512700	4.02	10215	1.39	1580	1.26	27760	4.82 *
Fishing & Trapping	46495	.36	2720	.37	845	.67	5140	.89 *
Forestry	112975	.89	3890	.53	1670	1.33	35255	6.12 *
Mining	193340	1.52	2925	.40	295	.24	16135	2.80 *
Manufacturing	2196745	17.24	91070	12.40	7075	5.65	80685	14.00 *
Construction	759170	5.96	46150	6.28 *	7560	6.03	36175	6.28
Trans. & Storage	565725	4.44	45995	6.26 *	4355	3.47	32155	5.58
Comm. & Other Utility	411875	3.23	27010	3.68 *	3235	2.58	15170	2.63
Wholesale Trade	584840	4.59	41515	5.65 *	3365	2.69	18550	3.22
Retail Trade	1606010	12.61	95295	12.98	17185	13.71 *	74365	12.90
F.I.R.E.	690895	5.42	53565	7.29 *	6300	5.03	21840	3.79
Business Services	588670	4.62	49890	6.79 *	6875	5.49	14230	2.47
Gov. Services	969280	7.61	39350	5.36	22310	17.80 *	37165	6.45
Educational Services	838070	6.58	41940	5.71	8530	6.81 *	35075	6.09
Health & Soc. Service	1041450	8.17	60925	8.30	13515	10.78 *	40265	6.99
Accom., Food & Bev.	806035	6.33	58725	8.00	10810	8.63 *	49120	8.52
Other Services	815955	6.40	63115	8.60 *	9820	7.84	37290	6.47
Total	12740230	100	734295	100	125325	100	576375	100

* denotes highest percentage among the three regional economies
Source: Statistics Canada 1988.

Table 2. Regional Economic Specialization in B.C., 1986

Industry	Location Quotients Vancouver	Victoria	B.C. Interior
Agriculture	.33	.44	3.51
Fishing & Trapping	.43	1.12	2.15
Forestry	.10	.45	9.46
Mining	.17	.16	7.47
Manufacturing	.99	.43	1.23
Construction	1.01	.96	1.00
Trans. & Storage	1.20	.58	.95
Comm. & Other Utility	1.40	.80	.75
Wholesale Trade	1.81	.59	.62
Retail Trade	.99	1.06	.99
F.I.R.E.	1.82	.87	.54
Business Services	2.26	1.12	.37
Gov. Services	.63	3.05	.90
Educational Services	.92	1.16	1.04
Health & Soc. Service	1.08	1.40	.81
Accom., Food & Bev.	.94	1.05	1.05
Other Services	1.28	1.02	.76
Concentration Index:	8.8	28.3	36.9

the location quotient, defined here for a particular sector i as

$$LQ_i = \frac{R_i/R}{P_i/(P - P_i)} \tag{1}$$

where R_i is regional employment in sector i, R is total regional employment, P_i is provincial employment in sector i, and P is total provincial employment. The location quotient for sector i is thus the ratio of the proportion of regional employment in the sector to the proportion of the base economy's employment in the sector. It is designed to reveal the extent to which a region under study specializes in a particular activity in comparison with the base economy. In order to accentuate the differences between the three economies, each of the location quotients of Table 2 was 'adjusted' by excluding from the base or provincial economy the particular regional economy for which the quotient was constructed.

The previously discussed specializations are clearly revealed in the Table. For the Vancouver region, the largest location quotients are in the producer service sectors of Business Services and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate. The outstanding location quotient for Victoria is, as expected, for the Government Services sector. The relative specialization of the Interior region in the resource based industries is shown by the region's exceedingly high location quotients in the Forestry and Mining sectors.

A second, complementary measure of economic specialization is the index of concentration (Hodes et al. 1988). Location quotients by themselves can at times be misleading in that the calculations contain a number of implicit assumptions.[3] The concentration index CI is here defined as

$$CI = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{(R_i/R - N_i/N)^2}{N_i/N} \tag{2}$$

where N_i and N represent national labor force in sector i and total national labor force, respectively. In contrast with the location quotient, the concentration index does not reveal in which sectors the economy specializes. It yields instead an overall index of the degree to which the economy is concentrated or specialized with respect to a base economy. The base economy is here taken to be the B.C. provincial economy. The concentration indices are shown at the bottom of Table 2. Because of the Interior's heavy concentration of labor in Forestry and Victoria's concentration

of labor in Government Services, both regions show indices signficantly higher than that of the Vancouver.

Economic Growth

In recent years it has been thoroughly documented that service activities, as opposed to the goods-producing activities are the prime employment generators in the developed economies throughout the world.[4] Over the last two decades, the service sector in Canada has accounted for more than 75% of the growth in employment. Service activities, particularly the producer services are expected to continue to be overwhelmingly the source of employment creation throughout the remainder of the century. [Economic Council 1984; Picot 1986]

From their specialization in service activities, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, the Vancouver and Victoria regions would be expected to experience growth rates which exceed that of the more goods-oriented economy of the Interior. Indeed, the rates shown in Table 3 meet these expectations. The base year of 1984 in the Table was chosen for two reasons. First, it is the initial year for which the 1971 boundaries of the Vancouver and Victoria CMAs were used by Statistics Canada in reporting its monthly and average annual employment estimates. (For 1983, the boundaries established in 1981 were used as the basis for employment estimation). Second, the 1984-85 period was the first in which the province had fully recovered from the general recession of the early 1980s and had begun again to register positive growth rates.[5]

In looking at future growth potential, an alternative to simply observing past rates of growth is to apply shift-share analysis. While there is good reason not to rely too heavily on the results of this particular analytic approach,[6] the technique does promote the organization of the data in such a way as to highlight the factors accounting for differences regional growth rates and thus provides some grounds for future expectations.

To compare the three economies, the provincial economy is taken as the benchmark or base economy. In Table 4, the 1981–1986 labour force expansion of each of the three regional economies (see appendix Table A.1) has been disaggregated into the three shift-share components: provincial

Table 3. Regional Population and Employment Growth, 1984-89

	Population		Employment	
	1989 (1000)	% Incr. 1984-89	1989 (1000)	% Incr. 1984-89
Vancouver	1212	14.0	773	28.6
Victoria	212	12.2	120	21.2
Interior	951	2.7	556	13.2

Source: Statistics Canada 1988; 1989a; 1989b.

Table 4. Regional Shift-Share Components, 1981-1986

Industry	Vancouver			Victoria			B.C. Interior		
	PS	IM	RS	PS	IM	RS	PS	IM	RS
Agriculture	8368	1416	431	1254	212	114	24289	4097	-545
Fishing & Trapping	2464	635	-379	686	177	-17	3771	972	397
Forestry	4752	136	-998	1661	48	-36	33267	952	1036
Mining	3798	-761	-112	273	-55	77	20132	-4033	36
Manufacturing	106562	-16759	1267	9875	-1427	-573	96566	-15187	-694
Construction	49269	-9991	6873	9268	-1879	172	54213	-10994	-7044
Trans. & Storage	49981	-1452	-2534	4698	-136	-287	30294	-888	2741
Comm. & Other Utility	27858	-648	592	3832	-72	275	16425	-389	-866
Wholesale Trade	46676	-5346	185	3458	-395	318	21589	-2463	-495
Retail Trade	92939	2572	-217	16194	448	542	72679	2012	-326
F.I.P.E.	52279	435	851	6884	57	-641	21867	182	-289
Business Services	46269	4025	-484	5239	456	1188	13885	1281	-776
Gov. Services	41747	-1638	-768	23898	-938	-658	37215	-1468	1418
Educational Services	45831	-2338	-761	9337	-483	-324	35844	-1855	1886
Health & Soc. Services	57572	5528	-2176	12514	1282	-281	34569	3328	2376
Accom., Food & Bev.	46649	8273	3883	9388	1649	-139	44833	7951	-3664
Other Services	42792	18771	1552	7527	3382	-1888	26298	11536	-543
Total	724289	2875	7211	124289	2165	-1129	587497	-5839	-6883

share, industrial mix, and regional shift. The provincial share component (PS) is the amount by which total labour force in the region would have increased over the period of analysis if it had expanded at the same rate as did provincial total labour force. Again letting R and P represent total regional and provincial labour force, respectively, the provincial share component of the change in regional labour force between the past period t-1 and the present period t is defined as

$$PS = \sum_i R_i^{t-1}(P^t / P^{t-1}) \tag{3}$$

The industrial mix component (IM) is that portion of the change in regional labour force attributable to the difference between the region's industrial mix and that of the province.

$$IM = \sum_i R_i^{t-1}(P_i^t / P_i^{t-1} - P^t / P^{t-1}) \tag{4}$$

The regional shift component (RS) is that portion of the change in regional labour force attributable to the difference between the region's and province's corresponding sectoral growth rates, i.e. to the region's advantages and disadvantages relative to the rest of the province.

$$RS = \sum_i R_i(R_i^t / R_i^t - P_i^t / P_i^{t-1}) \tag{5}$$

Total regional labour force at time t = PS + IM + RS.

From the results shown in Table 4 it can be seen that over the intercensus period 1981–86, the Vancouver economy displays both positive industrial mix and regional shift components. The industrial mix for Victoria is also positive, but the region suffers a negative shift component. Both the mix and shift components for the Interior are negative.

The provincial share component for Vancouver reveals that the 1986 total labour force in the region would have been 724,209 had the region grown at the same rate as did the province. The actual labour force for that year exceeded this figure by 10,086, however, due to the positive mix component and, particularly, to the positive regional share component. Given the region's growth in total labour force over the late 1980s, it is reasonable to expect the magnitude of this component in the next (1986–1991) intercensus period to be even larger, with an increase in the proportional contribution to the expansion from the producer services.

Like Vancouver, Victoria's provincial share component exceeded its recorded 1986 total labour force. The region grew slightly more rapidly over the 1981–86 period than did the province. With its

orientation toward the services, it too enjoyed a favorable industrial mix but, unlike Vancouver, it suffered a negative regional share component. Among the significant contributors to the unfavorable share component were Other Services, Government Services, F.I.R.E., and Manufacturing, all of which expanded at rates lower than those of the same sectors at the provincial level.

For the B.C. Interior regional economy, both the industrial mix and regional share components were negative. The unfavorable mix component is attributable in large part to the region's relative concentration of its labour force in the Manufacturing and Construction sectors. The latter sector also contributed heavily to the region's negative share component, declining by over 28.5%, twice that of the provincial rate of decline over the period.

In sum, relative to the other two regions of the province Vancouver possesses both a favorable industrial mix and a set of sectoral comparative advantages that bode well for future economic performance. In addition, the region has generally enjoyed unemployment rates lower than those of the other two regions, as seen in Table 5. Concerns about a growing divergence between the Vancouver region and the remainder of the province, particularly as employment generators, have been expressed by Ley and Hutton (1987) and Davis and Hutton (1989). These concerns are supported by Allen (1985) who argues that forestry and mining conditions in the province signify the end of economic growth based on resource exploitation.

Economic Linkages

To the extent that commodity trading relationships are well established between two regions, an economic stimulus to one region will produce an impact on the income and employment in the other region through these trading channels. Although data on any form of economic linkages among the three regions are virtually non-existent, there do exist obvious and significant economic ties among the regions. For example, each of the three regions clearly exports its specialization to the other two regions. Victoria provides governmental services to Vancouver and the Interior. The population agglomerations in the two metropolitan regions provide an important market for the Interior region's agricultural produce, forest products and specialty manufactures. The data

Table 5. Average Annual Unemployment Rates: Vancouver, Victoria and Interior Regions, 1975-1988

	Vancouver	Victoria	B.C. Interior
1975	7.1 *	8.2	10.6
1976	8.2	7.4 *	9.6
1977	7.7 *	8.6	9.5
1978	7.5 *	8.4	9.2
1979	6.9 *	8.3	8.4
1980	5.3 *	8.2	8.3
1981	4.9 *	6.9	8.7
1982	9.8 *	11.1	15.1
1983	12.2 *	14.0	15.6
1984	13.6 *	14.5	16.1
1985	13.2	13.0 *	15.5
1986	10.7 *	12.1	14.9
1987	11.4	10.9 *	13.0
1988	9.4 *	10.2	11.6
Avg.	9.1	10.1	11.9

*denotes lowest rate of the three regions

Source: constructed from Statistics Canada 1984; 1989a: 1989d

in Table 6, taken from the Vancouver input-output model, suggest that the Vancouver region has been exporting a substantial portion of its producer services to the rest of the province for at least the past two decades.[7]

Further examples can be readily offered. Post-secondary educational services are provided by Vancouver and by Victoria to each of the other two regions. The sizeable and technologically advanced medical complex in the City of Vancouver provides services to residents throughout the province. The Vancouver Stock Exchange is widely viewed as one of North America's prime venture capital markets and is largely oriented to providing capital for Interior resource projects. The port facilities and related services in the Vancouver region are critical to the movement of Interior products to overseas markets. Tourist services are provided by each of the regions to the remainder of the province.

While a number of other channels through which the three regions are interrelated could be enumerated, two important points need to be established. First, fundamental economic linkages among the three regions exist and a knowledge of these linkages is critical to the understanding of the nature and functioning of the provincial economy. Second, to date there has been very little research directed toward the empirical examination of these linkages.

Conclusion

The province of British Columbia contains three regional economies that are distinguished both structurally and by their recent performances. Metropolitan Vancouver has the highest per capita income of the three regions, has recorded the highest employment and population growth rates in recent years, and with its orientation toward the advanced or producer services arguably has the greatest potential for future growth and development. In the Metropolitan Victoria region, public-sector services play an overwhelming role in the economy which provide the region with an element of relative stability in employment but with a growth potential likely somewhat less than that of Vancouver. The B.C. interior, with its strong orientation toward the extractive industries,

Table 6. Service Exports from Vancouver to the Rest of the Province, 1971

Sector	Exports to Rest of B.C.	% of Total Exports	% of Total Sales
Trade & Transport	357535	34.7	20.8
Communications	64347	70.0	29.4
Utilities	59063	100.0	24.5
F.I.R.E.	94960	72.4	14.4
Health & Welfare	14395	98.6	4.8
Education	1107J	31.2	3.9
Business Services	153208	79.9	44.2
Other Services	39729	35.3	9.4

Source: Davis 1976

suffers a income per capita significantly below that of the other regions, a lower growth rate of employment, and a more problematic economic future.

In formulating province-wide or regional economic policy both the differences and economic linkages between the three economic regions need to be explicitly taken into account. Unfortunately, we have relatively little data regarding the economic interrelationships between the three regions. Research into this area could prove to have substantial benefits for those concerned with the development of provincial economic policy.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the definition and classification of producer and other services, see Stanback 1979; Daniels 1985; Bailly et al. 1987.

2. The Vancouver and Victoria CMA figures are for the year 1987 and were taken from Statistics Canada 1989c. The Interior figure is an estimate constructed from data contained in the same source.

3. For a discussion of location quotients and their underlying assumptions, see Isserman 1977; Norcliffe 1983.

4. See, e.g., Gershuny and Miles 1983; Price and Blair 1989.

5. As might be expected, Victoria's orientation toward administrative services, particularly in the public sector, enabled the region to withstand the recession much better than the other two regions. In the 1981-84 period, employment growth in Vancouver and the interior was -6.5%, while Victoria recorded a rate of -2.9%.

6. See, e.g., Richardson 1978; Stevens and Moore 1980; Kochanowski et al. 1989.

7. Survey research jointly undertaken by the City of Vancouver and the University of British Columbia reveals an asymmetrical relationship between the Vancouver region and the rest of the province. [Hutton 1987] Based on the data produced by this research, Ley and Hutton [1987, p.422] conclude that "Capital investment in resource development in the hinterland is accompanied by substantial leakage of an economic tythe to the advanced services of the metropolitan control centre... Within the metropolitan core, however, the complex of corporate activities shows no such leakages of inputs to the periphery."

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APPENDIX

Table A.1 1981 and 1986 Regional Labour Force Distributions

Industry	B.C.		Vancouver		Victoria		B.C. Interior	
	1981	1986	1981	1986	1981	1986	1981	1986
Agriculture	31575	39555	7810	10215	1170	1500	22595	27760
Fishing & Trapping	6460	8705	2380	2720	640	845	3520	5140
Forestry	37035	40815	4435	3090	1550	1670	31050	35255
Mining	22590	19355	3545	2925	255	295	18790	16135
Manufacturing	190860	178830	99460	91070	8470	7075	90130	80685
Construction	105235	89805	45985	46150	8650	7560	50600	36175
Trans. & Storage	79310	82505	46650	45995	4385	4355	28275	32155
Comm. & Other Utility	43415	45415	25255	27010	2830	3235	15330	15170
Wholesale Trade	66860	63430	43565	41515	3220	3365	20075	18550
Retail Trade	169635	186845	86745	95295	15115	17185	67835	74365
F.I.R.E.	75630	81705	48795	53565	6425	6300	20410	21840
Business Services	60960	78095	43185	44090	4890	6875	12085	14230
Gov. Services	96005	98825	38965	39350	22305	22310	34735	37165
Educational Services	84200	85545	42030	41940	8715	8530	33455	35075
Health & Soc. Services	97680	114785	53735	60925	11680	13515	32265	40265
Accom., Food & Bev.	94065	118655	43540	58725	8080	10810	41845	49120
Other Services	71510	118225	33940	63115	7825	9820	24545	37290
Total	1340785	1435990	675940	734295	116085	125325	548340	576375

Source: Statistics Canada 1984a; 1984b; 1988